

sively to its proper place in the natural series, an examination of the soft parts of its structure still remains to be made, which as yet I have had no opportunity of doing. But it appears to me that sufficient is known to show that *Leptosoma* can no longer be left as a genus of the family *Cuculidæ*, from which it differs in many important points, particularly in the form of the nostrils, in the presence of an auxiliary plume on the body-feathers, in having twelve tail-feathers, and in the structure of its feet. As far as I can at present form an opinion, a more natural situation for *Leptosoma* would be as the type of a separate family in the neighbourhood of the *Coraciidæ*. The singular structure of the nostrils very much resembles that of *Eurystomus*. *Eurystomus* also has the auxiliary plume, and the same number of tail-feathers—although differing from *Leptosoma* in the form of the sternum and the structure of the feet, so that they could hardly be associated together in the same family.

I have as yet had no opportunity of seeing more than a stuffed specimen of another singular Madagascar type—the *Brachypteracias leptosomus*; but I think it very probable, from the superficial examination I have made of it, that this, as suggested by Lesson, may be the missing link which connects *Leptosoma* with the *Coraciidæ*.

EXPLANATION OF THE FIGURES.

- Fig. 1. Head of *Leptosoma*, showing the projection of the loreal and frontal plumes, and the position of the nostrils.
 Fig. 2. Outline of the skull of *Leptosoma*, showing the position and form of the nasal apertures (*a*) and the ossified covering (*b*).
 Fig. 3. Lower surface of a feather from the back of a male *Leptosoma*, with part of the inner web removed, so as to show the auxiliary plume more clearly.
 Fig. 4. Lower surface of a feather from the breast of a female.
 Fig. 5. Upper surface of *Leptosoma* with feathers removed (reduced), showing the bifurcation of the spinal tract and the position of the two powder-down patches (*p, p*) and oil-gland (*o*).
 Figs. 6, 7. Sternum of *Leptosoma*.
 Fig. 8. Tongue and hyoid bones of *Leptosoma*.

6. NOTE ON THE NIDIFICATION OF MIRAFA HORSFIELDI.

By E. P. RAMSAY, OF DOBROYDE, N.S.W.

Not having hitherto met with any description of the nest and eggs of *Mirafra horsfieldi* of this colony, and deeming it a subject of regret that the eggs of so common a bird in our neighbourhood should remain any longer undescribed, I beg leave to offer a few remarks upon the habits and nidification of this Lark.

Our *Mirafra* (for, as far as is yet known, we have only one species) shows a decided preference for the cultivated parts of the country, although it may be found upon the grassy slopes, on the borders of creeks, and on the plains in the interior.

It is very plentiful in the hay-, barley-, and wheat-fields, where it may be frequently seen perched upon the top of a sheaf, pecking the

grain out of the ears, for which its short, thick bill seems wonderfully well adapted. Its flight differs slightly both from that of *Anthus* and *Cincloramphus*, but in some respects approaches nearer to that of the latter; it is very undulating. When the bird is about to descend, it quivers with its wings, and sails down with a peculiar tremulous motion. This may also be observed between each undulation when the bird is flying quietly: but when suddenly flushed or flying to any distance, this peculiarity is not noticeable; at other times it immediately attracts attention and renders this species conspicuous among all the other Larks—with which, during October and the three following months, the fields literally swarm, as they rise before you in numbers at every step you take.

The nests of *Mirafra horsfieldi* are usually found during the months of November, December, and often as late as January and February. They are loose ragged structures, and not finished off nicely, like those of *Anthus australis*. They are cup-shaped, and are composed wholly of grasses, without any particular lining. The situation chosen is a little hollow scraped out by the side of a tuft of grass or straw, or behind a clod of earth; the front edge of the nest alone is smoothed down—the back part being left ragged, and often drawn forward as if to help to conceal the eggs. The nest is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter by 1 inch in depth. On the 4th of February, 1861, we took a nest from a hay-field at M'Quarie Fields containing three eggs, which is the usual number. These are in length from 8 to 10 lines by from 6 to 7 in breadth, and of a light earthy brown, thickly marked over the whole surface with freckles of a much darker hue. Some specimens are darker in colour than others; and after a time the ground-colour becomes of a more yellowish tint, and the markings much duller and more indistinct.

7. INDIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES, CHIEFLY ON THE MIGRATION OF SPECIES. BY CAPT. R. C. BEAVAN, LIEUT. BENGAL SURVEY, C.M.Z.S.

July 28th, 1864, Barrackpore, near Calcutta.—The Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus melanocephalus*, Linn.) is common about the station, flying from tree to tree, and uttering his cheerful whistle. It is curious that one hardly ever sees the female of this bird, the proportion of males to females in collecting skins being generally as six to one. The Bengal Babbler (*Malacocercus terricolor*, Hodgson) is the characteristic inhabitant of the bamboo-groves in the neighbourhood; and small parties of them seem to keep much to particular spots near villages, but not, I think, with the dirt-devouring intent ascribed to them by some. In gardens the curious Tailorbird (*Orthotomus longicauda*, Gmelin) may be seen flitting from bush to bush in amorous pursuit of its mate, or diligently searching the creepers near the house for insects. The bare summit of a lofty *Casuarina* tree is generally frequented by a Barbet, of which two species are common, the first more so than the